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The imaging of Samoa in illustrated magazines and serial encyclopaedia in the early 20th century.

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The orthodox view is that Samoa, a popular subject with magazine editors, postcard suppliers, photography studios and travelogue writers at the beginning of the 20th C, was imaged in simple dichotomies of life-in-nature against life-in-the-city and an archaic past against a modern present with a suggestion of capitalist economic expansion and paternal colonial development. Samoa was therefore imaged in “*a few manageable and marketable clichés. These clichés consistently presented Samoans as primitive types inhabiting an unchanging Eden that did not participate in the Western world of technology, progress and time.*”¹ But the “Samoa” found in the public domain of profusely illustrated magazines and serial encyclopedia the visual record from 1900 to 1940 challenges these academic categorizations. Copycat photographers and plagiarist editors did reproduce stereotype images as a fascinated Euro-American audience demanded a glimpse down a jungle path at hidden, primitive tribes deep in the jungle - a visual media genre once *National Geographic, Asia, Wide World Magazine, Tour le Monde, Walkabout, Sphere* and other illustrated magazines became best sellers. Motivations deep in the colonial psyche did entice photographers to repeat a limited gallery of images and the captions typically given to these images – a native village, a dance group; a Samoan *taupou* – were a response to the photographers, and editors/readers interest in “natives” generally - housing, material culture, partly clothed bodies, ritual, dance, decorative arts and the alleged harmonious relationship between indigenous people and nature. The occasional school, governor’s residence, plantation, road or harbor-front scene represented colonial rule. Based on the assumption there was a small gallery of images in turn-of-the century mass-circulation illustrated magazines and serial encyclopedia, scholars have positioned “Samoa” against the modernity of the western world, and confused the figurative space with the photographic re-presentation of the actual.

The depiction of Samoa in the popular early 20th century media defies singular categorization. Any one monthly installment, pictorial feature or illustrated story was visually a *mélange*; being educative, promotional, ethnographic and an attempt at alterity, motivated by the photographers, authors and reader’s desire to accommodate and accentuate difference. But, equally it was market-driven and accidental, dependent on irregular access by editors to new photographic stock, borrowed postcards and distant Pacific correspondents.

¹ Nordstrom, A, Paradise recycled, 1991/1992, 15

1 *The orthodox academic view*

The entry on Samoa in the serial encyclopaedia, *The World of today* in 1907, included a studio portrait of a young man with a *ulalei* (whale tooth necklace) and elaborate *tuiga* (ceremonial headdress). To remind readers of the authenticity it was captioned “Photo”. The encyclopaedia’s title page suggested to readers they would find “a survey of the lands and peoples of the globe as seen in travel and commerce”² and presumably the staff of British, American and German companies and the occasional ship’s passenger would see men with similar physical appearance and dress should they visit Samoa. Although readers were told Samoan men kept their hair long and wore it in “different fashions” and warriors “affect a type of turban” the photograph depicted a young man with short hair with a ceremonial headdress associated with rank and title, rather than a turban. The studio portrait, a “type” projected as typical Samoan, was already a cliché by 1907 and widely available in Apia, Auckland, Sydney and Europe as prints or postcards. In Apia the photography studios of John Davis, AJ Tattersall and Thomas Andrew posed several anonymous young men around 1893 with a necklace, *tuiga* and often a club, as well as named and un-named young women in similar studio and exterior poses wearing *tuiga* and holding clubs or knives.³ The continuing presentation of these portraits as signifiers of Samoa is indicated by their use on the covers of two recent scholarly works on Oceania, in both cases using a portrait by Thomas Andrews.⁴

The last of six Samoan photographs used in *The world of Today* in 1907 was a serene family portrait of a man, woman and four children sitting on small outrigger in a lagoon on Savai’i Island. However, accompanying this image was a text warning of Samoan bellicosity, martial ardour, headhunting, throat cutting and war-mongering fleets that raided Tonga and Fiji. Were readers to assume the father was relaxing with his family during a respite from the usual round of brutal, grim unbridled savagery?

² Moncrieff, AHR, ed, *The World of today*, (6 volumes) London, Gresham Publishing 1907

³ The naming of portraits was often random and confused by overlapping use of given name, title and honorific, as well as misspelling. For example, a John Davis portrait c1895 is named “Princess Fa’ane” (Blanton, *Picturing paradise*, 1995, Illustration 29, page 71) but is named “Sao Tama’ita’i Faamu, daughter of Malietoa Laupepa” in a slightly different pose in another portrait (Meleisea, *Lagaga*, plate 1). Her full name is Fa’amusami Malietoa. Fa’amu, the shortened version of Fa’amusami is misspelled Fa’ane on the Davis portrait. (I thank Lau Asofou So’o for alerting me to the spelling error). An early 1900s postcard made from the same photograph (publisher not known) was anonymously captioned “A Samoan Dancing Girl”. (I thank Max Shekleton for alerting me to this postcard; in the private collection of Max Shekleton, Noumea). Nordström notes the use of a portrait of Fa’amusami on a Muir and Moodie postcard from New Zealand, c1910 and in prints held by museums in the USA. (Nordstrom, *Paradise recycled*, 1991/1992, 10 and 11-12.)

⁴ For examples see, Blanton, *Picturing paradise*, 1995, 71, 86 and 127. For Andrews portraits as covers see, Maxwell, *Colonial photography and exhibitions*, 1999 and Mageo, *Cultural memory* 2001. The print and postcard collection of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney (Stephen, *Pirating the Pacific*, 1993, 40) and the Pictorial collection of the National Library of Australia have similar portraits (Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, 97).

Encyclopaedia or illustrated magazine readers probably discounted these contradictory text and visual narratives, being tutored early in the boom in published illustrated material that photographs were not recording reality but what outsiders imagined of Samoa, however, we need to know more about the reading habits of early 20th century encyclopaedia purchasers, casual readers and photograph browsers – did they absorb discerningly both text and image, or did they glance superficially at only the full and half page black and white and coloured photographs? As the two narratives were often opposed and unrelated, readers may have accepted that photographs carried truth and were therefore educative, and that text, full of romantic, colonial and travelogue conventions, was merely entertainment. It seems that when text and photograph projected contradictory meanings and opposing narratives ran side by side, editors and readers were comfortable with this manner of knowing Samoa.

The other four photographs of Samoa in *The world of Today* depicted Apia and its harbour front, a posed group portrait along the coast, a studio portrait of a woman with one breast exposed captioned “Samoa *taupou* or village virgin” and a posed group portrait of children and youths outside a village *fale* captioned “girls making kava”, which they were not doing, although the central figure was seated on a mat behind a kava bowl. It should be noted that the author/photographer in Samoa had little influence over captioning decisions by editors in Sydney, Berlin, Paris and London and captions often mediated in alarming ways the visual evidence.

Some Samoan photographs had long histories, being republished decades later without indication of their production. For example, although destined as a present for the Kaiser, an ‘*alia*, photographed by Tattersall c1902 and one of the last of its kind to be constructed, eventually broke up on a beach in Samoa, having proved too big to ship to Germany. The same ‘*alia* also appears as a Fijian canoe in the *Cyclopedia of Fiji*. Yet different photographs of this ‘*alia* were republished in 1907, 1926 and 1936 with the suggestion that it was typical of the presumably still current skills of Samoan shipbuilders and navigators.⁵ Conversely, another Tattersall photograph c1900, of two Samoans with long fishing poles in a *va’a alo* or sewn-plank bonito fishing canoe, was republished by Haddon and Hornell in 1936 and by *Walkabout* magazine in 1946 to suggest Samoa relied on ancient and traditional technologies in harmony with nature, yet failed to note this type of canoe was still in daily use, and is so today.⁶ Could readers distinguish between past and present – was Samoa “unchanged by the years” (*Walkabout* 1946) and would the ability to draw meaning from the image have been enhanced if readers were informed that certain canoes such as the *amatasi* (large outrigger voyaging canoe) and the *va’a tele* (large double canoe) had actually been

⁵ This ‘*alia* appears in Kramer, *The Samoan Islands*, 1902, Vol 2, 282; *Cyclopedia of Fiji*, 1907, p.184; *Cyclopedia of Samoa*, 1907, 15; Hammerton, *People of all nations*, 1926, 4394 and Haddon and Hornell, *Canoes of Oceania*, 1936, p.242. Kramer (2 Vols, 1902) and *Cyclopedia of Samoa* (1907) randomly use the same photographs for both Fiji and Samoa, such as the ‘*alia* cited above as well as pap paw, banana and dance groups; Kramer, 1902, 165, 171, 282 and 367; *Cyclopedia of Samoa*, 1907, 12, 15, and 87.

⁶ Haddon and Hornell, *Canoes of Oceania*, 1936, 234. In *Walkabout*, this same photograph of a *va’a alo* was used as the opening or contextualising image; Maine, L, “Report on Samoa”, *Walkabout*, Feb 1946, 15.

displaced by the “modern” Fiji-inspired ‘*alia* prior to 1850. If photographs were appearing out-of-time, were from different countries and readers were not being warned about the appropriate chronology of the images, it is difficult to argue today that in a defined era, one or other stereotype or dominant paradigm prevailed. The problem is threefold; firstly the photographs appearing in a defined era, say the New Zealand period 1914 to World War 11, were not necessarily from that era; and secondly, despite claims in the text of an “unchanged” enduring archaic tradition in Samoa, the visual evidence often offered contradictory evidence, portraying visually a modern, adaptive and progressive Samoa. Thirdly, the images being published in illustrated magazines and encyclopaedia from 1900 to 1950 were not limited to a small repetitive gallery of bare-breasted women and costumed chiefs and warriors.

The following discussion, drawing mostly on English language sources and material from Western Samoa (now Samoa), addresses these issues and proposes an alternative historical analysis of the colonial photographs of Samoa, the most extensively covered field in Oceanic photographic studies.

The archive of late 19th and early 20th century Samoan photography is extensive⁷ and grew from six very different motivations – the commercial trade by resident photographers in Samoa from the 1890s onwards, the insatiable demand by editors for pictorial material to satisfy the booming early 20th century postcard, illustrated book, magazine, encyclopaedia and newspaper trade, a desire by early museums and repositories to develop “Oceanic” collections (though these collections remained small and were subsequently overlooked), the visits of film maker Robert Flaherty and the anthropologist Margaret Mead in the 1920s, the voyeur market in naked bodies and belles and the colonial need for propaganda on the expansion of western commerce, capitalism and imperial control. Margaret Jolly argues there was a “close connection between eroticism and exoticism and political and military colonisation”⁸ and Nordström adds that the Samoan coverage of magazines like *National Geographic* arose from an “unchanging role as a vehicle for capitalist and imperialist ideology”.⁹ But the motivations of the Euro/Americans were changing, as was Samoa. Subjects, photographers, audiences and editors changed dramatically between 1890 and 1950 and this is reflected in the published visual depiction of Samoa across this period. Samoans had been appropriated and in Peter Hempenstall’s view had become an “exemplary indigenous community caught up in the history of western imperialism”.¹⁰ In a series of essays by various scholars in the 1990s, (Linnekin, Nordström, Webb, Edwards, Jolly, Mesenhöller, Fox, Megeo and Maxwell) Euro/American and colonial motivations in art, literary works, photographs and exhibitions about Samoa were discussed, but the analysis, periodisation and categorisation were presented with varying degrees of persuasion and success. Underlying the earliest Euro-American and later revisionist 19th century interpretations of Samoa was an evolution that visually followed a conventional eurocentric sequence of first impact, expanding European control, annexation and global incorporation. Hempenstall summarised the orthodox view of the 1990s,

⁷ Nordström notes that known USA repositories hold 15000 photographs of Samoa dated 1870-1925. (Nordström, *Photography of Samoa*, 1995, 11)

⁸ Jolly, *From Point Venus to Bali Ha’i*, 1997, 99

⁹ Nordstrom, *Wood nymphs and patriots*, 1992, 49

¹⁰ Hempenstall, *The colonial imagination*, 1997, 66

stating “over and over images of the Samoan people have been cannibalised to construct a people of legendary proportions, a template for the fashioning of a wide range of European views about cultural differences, colonial history and the nature of the indigene”.¹¹ In the wake of an affray during La Pérouse’s visit in 1787, the earliest Euro-American image of Samoans was of a distant, muscular, demonic, treacherous and savage race. Jocelyn Linnekin, in the first of the 1990s essays noted the process from “condemnation to vindication” and eventual revision due to missionary and literary rendering in the mid 19th century. In this change, Samoans were re-imagined from demons to peaceful, beautiful people civilised by contact with Europeans. An extension of Linnekin’s argument would characterise late 19th and early 20th century photographers as cementing the revised Euro-American perception of a peaceful Samoa, with studios in Samoa and visiting photographers providing the visual mass for a worldwide dissemination of enduring images of a paradisaical, classical South Seas “Samoa”. An extension of this argument into the 1920s would include the romantic, idyllic rendering of Flaherty’s film *Moana of the South Seas* and Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa*, a film and book now with their own critical and controversial historiography separate from any image-making role they played in Euro-American knowing of Samoa as a place.¹²

Nordström’s argument is that after the mid-19th century revision, Samoans were frozen, trapped and “consistently depicted as operating in an unchanging mythic past, unrelated to the realities of the dominant European/American world”¹³ but Jolly correctly notes there is a gap between the “consistency of the trope in European visions of the beautiful, partially clad, usually Polynesian women ... (and) the shifting character of colonial and strategic relations in the region”.¹⁴ Others have ignored the analytical contradictions between a changing/unchanging Samoa and changing/unchanging Euro/American motivations but Nordström elsewhere acknowledges that a “consistent reiteration of established marketable themes ... ignored actual changes in Samoan culture.”¹⁵ Analytical confusion continues as Nordstrom notes, also correctly, that published images “almost invariably suggested topicality in a way that disallowed the possibility of cultural change”.¹⁶ Fox, in a discussion on Samoan portraits, argues that visually Samoa drifted back and forth between European narratives of the self, the picturesque, and imperialism and “the desire to envision the lost, pre-modern world by means of the representation of the indigenous as unaffected by change”.¹⁷ However, Edwards, citing Barthes, Bakhtin, Godsen, Cavada and Sontag, suggests the there-then becomes the here-now. She concludes, “temporal and spatial processes entangle the event and its images and are

¹¹ Hempenstall, *The colonial imagination*, 1997, 65

¹² Jolly, *From Point Venus to Bali Ha’i*, 1997; Tiffany, *Imagining the South Seas*, 2001; Mageo, *The third meaning*, 2001.

¹³ Nordström, *Wood nymphs and patriots*, 1992, 51

¹⁴ Jolly, *Point Venus to Bali Ha’i*, 1997, 100

¹⁵ Nordström, *Early photography*, 1991, 277. None of photographs discussed by Nordström appear, for example, in a sample including the magazines and serial encyclopaedia *The World of Today*, *The New World of Today*, *People of all nations*, *Asia*, *National Geographic* and *Walkabout*.

¹⁶ This comment is repeated in Nordström (1991/1992, 6-15) and Nordström 1995, 15.

¹⁷ Fox, *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, 15

thus integrally active in the production of meaning”.¹⁸ Edward’s seminal analysis of colonial photography raises the intriguing question of how readers in the 1920s and 1930s drew meaning from photographs they assumed were current but were of an “old Samoa” taken in the 1890s and which in turn suggested the Samoa of pre-Pérouse days.

My response is threefold; there was not a consistent reiteration in the illustrated media of the 1900-1940 period, Samoans were not frozen in an archaic past and there is no apparent pattern or chronological development in these examples from 1899 to 1953. Past and present are juxtaposed, promiscuous and orderless.

It is therefore misleading for Nordström to reproduce and privilege three “belle” images in her discussion of *National Geographic’s* imaging of Samoa when a third of the photographs published in the 1899, 1919 and 1941 editions were of roads, plantations, towns, whaleboats and the USA administration, and captions reminded readers that this was not a gallery depicting an archaic past, but ethnographic (even photo-journalistic) depictions of a living culture of *siapo, fa’alavelave* (reciprocal exchange of food and gifts) chiefly installation, prosperous villages and technically impressive *fale* architecture.¹⁹ Despite claims of consistency of trope and reiteration, the evidence indicates that readers of illustrated magazines and serial encyclopaedia were confronted with an undifferentiated globalised iconography rather than a narrow, repetitive gallery of Samoan stereotypes, and although captions and text might occasionally describe an archaic past-in-the-present, Samoa was not always depicted as a unchanging South Seas paradise. Simply put, the visual evidence in mass circulation illustrated publications does not support the 1990s orthodox academic view of how Samoa was imaged and imagined.

2 *The evidence - in the public domain*

The weekly and monthly instalments of serial encyclopaedia and pictorial magazines bought from newsstands or posted were popular, widely available and inexpensive. Relying heavily on photography, they were patriotic, educational, entertaining and offered glimpses of distant worlds. They were published in France, Netherlands, Britain and the USA, all with colonies in the Pacific, and on Samoa particularly in Germany with *Koloniale Rundschau*, *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*, *Kolonie und Heimat*, *Bruecke zur Heimat*, *Koloniales Jahrbuch*, *Gartenlaube*, *Illustrierte Zeitung Leipzig* and *Globus*.²⁰ When instalment 37 of *Countries of the world* appeared, a British serial publication of forty-two instalments ending in 1925, also available as a bound set of six volumes, it presented the “South Sea Islands” in twenty-three black and white photographs, one full-page photogravure and five full colour plates. This issue also included eighty-three photographs of South Africa, Spain, Stockholm and South America. With four maps and 112 photographs, its 103 pages were typical of the serial encyclopaedia format. When Sir Basil Thompson’s “Palm fringed Edens of Oceania” appeared in *Countries of the World* it included four

¹⁸ Edwards, *Time and space on the quarterdeck*, 2001, 116-17

¹⁹ Nordström, *Wood nymphs and patriots*, 1992; Webster, 1899; Quinn, 1919; Bailey, 1941.

²⁰ I thank Peter Hempenstall and Andrea Schmidt for alerting me to the range of illustrated publications in Germany.

full colour plates and twenty-four black and white photographs. When another Basil Thompson article, “Island life in the strange South Seas” appeared in 1926 in another serial encyclopaedia, *Peoples of all nations*, it included ninety-one photographs. Frank Fox’s shorter article on Samoa in the same volume included one full colour plate, nine photogravures and nineteen black and white photographs. The visual content on colonies, countries and regions conformed to a editorial formula that had rapidly evolved - studio portraits in traditional costume, exterior group portraits that doubled as scenic views (by positioning the group in the foreground of a townscape, topographical feature, dwelling or village), material culture (canoes, *siapo/tapa*, tattoo, pottery, weapons) and symbolic aspects of European colonialism (roads, plantations, public buildings and wharves). This formulaic gallery with varying emphasis on one or other of these categories can be found in Middle East, African, Asian and Oceanic entries in serial encyclopaedia.

Sir John Alexander Hammerton, the editor of several illustrated serial encyclopaedia, noted there was considerable discipline demanded of readers as they switched in each instalment, for example, from Samoa to Spain, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland and Syria. He wondered if readers “ever had some slight sense of discomfort in leaping in the turn of a page from one end of the earth to another ... a certain cogitation is desirable and possible between items in a work of this kind”. He suggested to readers the “technical advantage conferred by alphabetisation”²¹ meant worrying incongruities would be obscured or mentally set aside. Hammerton’s commentary raises the interesting question – did readers see an undifferentiated global mass of “natives”, thatched houses and exotic views or did they label and memorise unique characteristics of each culture, tribe or clan? By replicating composition and setting, photographers added to the creation a global stereotype. In instalment 37 of *Countries of the world* readers might have conflated variant visual narratives as “natives” of both South Africa and the South Seas were shown sitting in villages, carrying out local rituals or everyday actions and labouring in European enterprises. In *Peoples of all nations*, scenes in Samoa and those of a Peruvian Indian dwelling with a jungle background, a Filipino boy about to climb a coconut palm, Zimbabweans dressed in sailor’s uniforms and a river-bank group assembling with their canoes²² could easily be read in a mediated, congruent and conflated understanding of the distant colonial world. This would suggest historians should search for links between a specific location and defined intellectual, political or imperial hegemonies, but should also analyse specific locations like Samoa in the context of a globalising, photographic and homogenised “other”. Was it Samoa specifically that readers looked for, or “natives” generally?

The opening ten photographs of Frank Fox’s article on Samoa included eight individual and group portraits, with several doubling to provide a view of a *fale*, the braiding of ‘*afa* (coconut fibre or sennit), *siapo* (tapa) making and a *tulafāle* (orator) dressed in mats and holding a *to’oto’o* (orator’s staff). Two portraits doubled as voyeuristic poses. In three portraits men and women were shown holding weapons. Two photographs of canoes, and two of dancing completed this introductory set. The

²¹ Hammerton, JA, “From the editor’s desk”, *Countries of the world*, Vol 37, 1925, ii and iii.

²² *Peoples of all nations*, Vol 6, 1926, (Peru) 4042, (Philippines) 4106, (Rhodesia) 4213 and (Rhodesia) 4219.

ten colour plates and photogravure section – where content and message is more pronounced because of the use of special paper, processes and colour – included eight individual or group portraits with two doubling as an ‘ava (kava) ceremony and a display of weapons, *tuiga*, and the *to’oto’o ma le fue* (staff and whisk of orators). Two photogravures depicted *siapo* making and the preparation of dough made from breadfruit. In the 1920s these images might have suggested an “unchanged” Samoa, but shirts, trousers, leather belts, trucks, steel shovels, umbrellas and cotton print ‘*ie lavalava* (wrap around) are also visible to remind readers that Samoa was not a “land where time stood still”, frozen in the past, and excluded from the modern world. In the 1930s-1950s *Walkabout* focussed much less on portraits including only two close-ups and one voyeuristic composition of a partially clothed woman in a stream thinly disguised as a forest view. There were no studio shots. Two photographs of canoes and one of a village might have suggested an archaic Samoa, but readers were left no doubt that Samoa was fully integrated into the modern world. The opening scenes included a fine road through a fenced, fully developed copra plantation, an ox-cart transporting coconuts, a dance performed on the sports ground for a large public ceremony and the impressive double-storied residence, “Vailima”, Robert Louis Stevenson’s old home.

Editorial control over imaging is demonstrated by a comparison between *The World of Today*, published in 1907, and *The new world of Today*, a revised edition published in 1922. Only one photograph, a group posed outside a *fale*, was repeated. A voyeuristic studio portrait of a partially clothed *taupou*, a studio portrait of a titled male in full costume, a view of Apia harbour and two group portraits with outriggers and coastal views as a background were replaced in the 1922 edition by a single portrait of a young woman dressed in elaborate costume, the New Zealand Administrator’s residence, the grave of Robert Louis Stevenson on Mt Vaia, a group portrait of sitting female dancers and a *fale* allegedly belonging to a “well-to-do” Samoan family. There is no apparent evolution or hegemonic discourse shaping this visual record. Its portrayal of Samoa is more random than deliberate. If a further comparison is made between the photographs in *The World of Today* in 1907/1922 and the photographs in *Walkabout* and *National Geographic* in the 1940s and 1950s, a similar randomness is evident. *Walkabout* and *National Geographic* repeated portraits of men and women wearing *tuiga*, dancing, chiefly ceremonies, food preparation, *fale* and canoes and voyeuristic “belles” and jungle views do appear, but modern Samoa was also depicted in plantations, schools, Matson cruise ships, radio stations, churches and administration buildings.

One pattern in the published photography of Samoa is the repetition of portraits, in both studio and exterior individual or group settings. Mesenhöller notes 63% of the 272 photographs in a Samoan collection at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum of Ethnography in 1911 were portraits.²³ In *Peoples of all nations* in 1926, 65% of the photographs were portraits and if several “scenes” are considered as doubling as both a portrait and a view of a *fale*, canoe or *siapo* making, the percentage would be

²³ Mesenhöller, *Ethnography considers history*, 1995, 42-44. 18% of images were of villages or dwellings and 15% of everyday Samoan activities. When the National Library of New Zealand collected 130 prints from Thomas Andrew c1940, portraits were less dominant and European activities and scenic views featured more prominently; Nordström, *Early photography in Samoa*, 1991, 280.

greater. Nearly 50% of Frances Flaherty's photographs in *Asia* magazine in 1925 and 40% of *Walkabout's* Samoan photographs in 1934-1954 were portraits. But, there is no apparent ideological or evolutionary sequence in these portraits. They are presented in a random chronology with or without carved wooden clubs and steel knives, with or without *ulalei*, *tuiga*, *siapo*, 'ie *tōga*, *titi* and dressed with, without or partially in ceremonial costume. By the 1930s, the carefully lit studio portrait was a relic of an earlier era of photography practice but they persisted in the media and portraits taken in the 1890s were continually republished. A survey of published photographs from the mid-1890s through to the 1940s does indicate one significant change in photography practice as photographers moved to exterior locations, a *la flaneur* approach and began to merge techniques of portraiture, propaganda and photojournalism. A few early studio portraits continue to be republished today, but this indicates more about the narrow research parameters of today's academics than it does about turn-of-the-century collection habits and the attempts of early 20th century editors to construct an idyllic, archaic, timelessness in Samoa.

3 Conclusion

The claim that in the mass media “photographs of women, almost invariably young, attractive and partially clothed predominate”²⁴ is challenged by the “Samoa” presented in serial encyclopaedia and illustrated magazines. A repetition of visual clichés representing a romantic South Seas is evident but not overwhelming. In the case of portraits, scenic views, *fale* or ‘ava ceremonies, Nordström notes they could be republished in the 1920s and 1930s because their subject matter was consistent over several decades,²⁵ but editors also added a school, plantation workers, a double-storied Apia building or a truck carrying coconuts to the Samoan gallery to record modernising and civilising progress. Historians also need to acknowledge that images of Samoa in the public domain gathered several meanings as they made a “rapid and distant migration”.²⁶ They were not simply “colonial documents” nor were they only “indoctrinating citizens in the ideology of progress”. They were also artefacts of seduction and voyeurism, souvenirs in a 19th century passion for collecting and an adventure taken from the comfort of an armchair. They also served to both contradict their origins and to “replicate the power relations of their production”, and as Edwards suggests they “inscribe and present multiple spaces and multiple histories that have the potential to subvert the ideological discourses of the image’s creation”.²⁷ They were not, as Maxwell claims, “portraying indigenous subjects as noble and ignoble savages preserved in pre-colonial time”.²⁸ And it is too simplistic to categorise photographs as only promoting pro-or anti-colonial attitudes. The evidence in illustrated magazines and encyclopaedia does not support Maxwell’s claim that through photography indigenous people could “register their disapproval of (*Germany and*) New Zealand’s imperial programme” nor is there sufficient repetition and consistency in the illustrated media to support a claim that certain photographers

²⁴ Nordström, *Early photography in Samoa*, 1991, 274

²⁵ Nordström, *Early photography in Samoa*, 1991, 281

²⁶ Phrases in the following paragraph are from; Nordström, “Photography of Samoa, 1995, 11; Edwards, *Raw histories*, 2001, 108; Maxwell, *Colonial photography and exhibitions*, 1999, 11.

²⁷ Edwards, *Raw histories*, 2001, 109.

²⁸ Maxwell, *Colonial photography and exhibitions*, 1999, 165.

“concentrated on producing images that perpetuated the myth of Samoan’s savagery.” The evidence suggests some editors deliberately tried to sympathetically position Samoans as both traditional and modern.²⁹ Nordström is able to show how *National Geographic* occasionally depicted Samoans in an “unchanging mythic past”³⁰ and the popular illustrated media did promote a dialogue for readers between what Nordstrom calls “unequal worlds”³¹ but the day-to-day practice of magazine and encyclopaedia editors did not always conform to these artificial academic categorisations. Academic historical analysis so far has demanded that several thousands of images in the popular mass-circulation media be categorised in narrowly defined dichotomies and oppositions. It is true that “certain photographs or clusters of photographs become signature images”³² and this can be seen in studio portraits of Samoan men and women adorned with *tuiga*, or the ‘ava ceremony performed by partially clothed females in front of a *fale*. However, as Edwards notes “extended discourse brings new contexts into play, which may constitute contradictions and which must be embraced by a different explanatory system”.³³ In 1926, the caption to a posed exterior portrait of a young woman claimed, “although royalty exists no more in Samoa, birth and breeding are manifest, as in the gracious figure of this girl of princely origin”.³⁴ The facts are wrong, the combination of adornment and dress probably misleading, the “princely” genealogy of the woman suspect and its production in 1895, 1905 or 1925 obscured. The caption probably had little impact. For Euro/American readers it was the picture – the image – and this image had multiple readings as each reader differently knew and retained “Samoa” in both private and collective memory. In illustrated magazines and serial encyclopaedia. Samoa was known visually in ways not necessarily categorised so far by the discourses privileged by scholars in the 1990s. There is still much to discover about the reception of photography in the public domain and particularly how readers reacted to the contradictory imaging of Samoa they found in their weekly and monthly magazine and encyclopaedia instalments.

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²⁹ Maxwell, *Colonial photography and exhibitions*, 1999, 166 (my phrase added in italics) and 178

³⁰ Nordström, *Wood nymphs and patriots*, 1992, 51

³¹ Nordström, *Wood nymphs and patriots*, 1992, 51

³² Edwards, *Raw histories*, 2001, 12

³³ Edwards, *Raw histories*, 2001, 109

³⁴ Fox, *Samoa*, 1926, 4407

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Appendix 1 Illustrated encyclopaedia and magazines 1907-1953

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Original captions in *italics*.

(Bracket) refers to size of photograph on page

Photographer/publisher noted if identified or otherwise known

- ARH Moncrieff, ed, *The world of Today*, Volume 4, London, Gresham, 1907,
 p.161 *Samoa "taupou" or village virgin*, Martin, Auckland (older woman)
 p.163 *Girls making kava*, Martin, Auckland (large group lying in front of fale; same as 4402 in Hammerton *People of all nations*, Vol 6)
 p.181 *Samoa chief with head-dress*, Martin, Auckland (studio shot)
 p.183 *Apia, Samoa*, Martin, Auckland
 p.185 *Scene in Samoa with group of natives*, Martin, Auckland (on rocky beach)
 p.187 *Natives and canoe, Savai'i*, Martin, Auckland (man, woman and 4 chn) 1890+ (see Stanton, p.85)
- JR Hammerton, ed, *People of all nations*, Volume 6, Educational Book Co, 1920
 4390 *Mellifluous oratory of the native tulafale charms the ears of the kanakas of Samoa* (full page) anon
 4392 *Aged fingers nimble still in braiding twine* (half page), Underwood (2 men)
 np *Samoa; Island warrior in wartime dress* (full page, colour) Brown and Dawson
 4393 *Capable womanhood busy on Samoa's main home industry* (3/4 page), Brown Brothers (woman making mats)
 4394 *Shipbuilding and seamanship that won for the Samoans the proud name of navigators* (full page), Brown Brothers
 4395 *Amphibious young kanakas at play among the blue lagoons that fringe the Samoan Islands* (full page), Underwood Press Service (9 canoes on beach)
 4396 *Fair daughters of a handsome race* (full page) AJ Tattersall (topless, studio with clubs)
 4397 *Maids of honour of a Samoan Taupo*, (Full page), anon (very young girls, topless under leaves)
 4398 *Carefree indolent native life in the genial climate of the beautiful islands of Samoa*, (full page), anon (cricket match)
 4399 Half – *Symphony of arms in a performance of the siva dance* (anon) (three girls sitting outside fale)
 Half – *Among the merry and pleasure loving natives of Samoa* (anon) (four women dancing outside)
 4400 *Formidable weapon of Samoan warrior* (1/4 page), Underwood (studio portrait with club)
 4401 Sepia plate; 6 women in studio, full dress
 4402 Sepia plate; large group lying in front of fale, Brown Brothers (same as Moncrieff 1907 p.163)
 4403 Sepia plate – half; Woman dying tapa cloth outside fale
 Sepia plate – half; woman preparing breadfruit flour (Underwood)
 4404 Sepia plate; older man from Pago Pago with bow and spears (Brown&Bro)
 4405 Sepia plate; 2 women in full dress, outside (Brown&Bro)
 4406 Sepia plate: woman in checkerboard pattern tapa dress (Underwood)
 4407 Sepia plate: Young girl in full dress (with fan)
 4408 Sepia plate; squatting man with whisk and staff
 4409 half-page; *Girl members of a gentle-mannered island community* (two young girls topless with palm leaf) (Keystone View Co)
 4410 *After the coconut harvest in Samoa; skilled labour making copra* (AJ Tattersall) c1905 (see Stanton, p. 28; Nordstrom 1991, p.280)

- 4411 half-page; *collecting nuts for copra-making on a coconut plantation* (2 men with truck) (AJ Tattersall)
- 4412 *Popular sport among the South Sea Islanders; Samoans engaged in baseball match* (cricket)
- 4413 *Sunshine falls on bride and bridegroom in Samoa at the outset of their married life* (large group seated)
- 4414 Half-page; *Eligible residence for a well-to-do family in Samoa* (3 women and child sitting on grass)
Half-page; *Cloth making without looms in the Samoan Islands* (woman making tapa patterns)
- 4415 half-page; *Samoan house in construction showing framework of roof* (Underwood)

ARH Moncrieff, ed, *The new world of Today*, Volume 4, London, Gresham, 1922

- 165 Half-page; *The favourite Polynesian beverage; girls making tapa* (Martin, Auckland) same as Moncrieff 1907 p.163
- 167 half-page; *Samoa; a native dance – the Siva* (outside fale, seated group of chief and 5 girls and one man)
- 185 ¼ page; *Samoa; a young native princess* (girl seated holding flowers)
- 187 Half-page; *Samoa; the grave of Robert Louis Stevenson at the top of Mt Vaea*
- 189 half-page; *Samoa; a well to do native family and their home* (same as Hammerton *People of all nations* p.4414)

Walkabout; Australia's Geographical Magazine (Sydney, Australia 1934-1973)

- p.41 June 1936 *Plantations lining a Samoan road* (half-page)
- p.42 June 1936 *Steam of lava flowing into the sea, Samoa* (half-page)
- p.13 March 1941 1/5-page; *A Samoan belle in ceremonial head-dress* (AJ Tattersall)
- p.13 March 1941 1/5-page; *A Samoan chief, of Apia* (AJ Tattersall)
- p.15 Feb 1946 ¼-page; *Samoans in their native pao-pao (outrigger)* (in a lagoon)
- p.16 Feb 1946 1/5-page; *A mountain stream* (topless woman)
- p.16 Feb 1946 1/5-page; *RLS and a Samoan* (standing before shrubbery)
- p.17 Feb 1946 *Samoan houses in a coastal village* (half-page)
- p.18 Feb 1946 "Vailima" (1/10-page)
- p.14 April 1953 *Canoes off beach and palms* (half-page)
- p.15 April 1953 *Gils dancing on arena before large crowd* (1/4-page)
- p.16 April 1953 ¼-page; *Ox-cart in coconut plantation*
- p.16 April 1953 ¼ page; *Teacher with line up of singing children*